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SB0037: Maryland Service Animal Programs-
Participant Disqualification- Revisions
Finance Committee
January 27, 2026
Position: Support

The Arc Maryland is a statewide training, support, and advocacy organization that is dedicated to advancing and preserving the rights and quality of life of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

We were pleased to support the legislation that created the Maryland Service Animal Program last year and are equally supportive of SB0037 which includes a clarifying amendment to safeguard the intention of the legislation and clarify criteria for disqualification of a participant in the program. The bill would re-defining, in more certain terms, the conditions under which a disqualification may occur: if the nonprofit entity determines that the Program participant's involvement in the Program presents a danger to the program participant's mental or physical well-being, presents a **direct threat** to others, presents a **direct threat** to the mental or physical well-being of the service dog, support dog, or therapy horse, or does not meet the training requirements of the nonprofit training entity, the individual may be disqualified. In the original bill (now law), the terms "has caused" (harm) or "may potentially cause harm" created ambiguity which SB0037 seeks to resolve.

According to 2024 CDC data, there are approximately 70 million people in the United States living with disabilities. Less than one percent are teamed with service animals. Service animals provide invaluable support and assistance to individuals with disabilities as not only loyal companions, but necessary supporters that enable their handlers to live, learn, work, and thrive with greater independence and confidence.

We are grateful for this program, and respectfully request a favorable report on SB0037.

Ande Kolp, Executive Director www.thearcmd.org